

A Letter from Paul Hobbs, Church President

Dear Fellow Members,

We start each Board of Trustees and Executive Committee meeting with a prayer. I expect all of the committee and team meetings do as well. Of course, it sets the tone to have a moment of meditation, common thought, and peace. The following is a prayer I offered in January and I'd like to share it with you: *"God, on this beautiful day may we greet each other as companions on a shared journey. We acknowledge that we and others have carried gratitude and sadness, excitement and anxiety, private struggles and collective hopes. As we take this next step forward, may we do so in the knowledge that we do not walk alone."*



Perhaps ironically, given the persistent separation, I really feel the *"shared journey"* part of this prayer these days and I continue to be grateful that this leadership opportunity came along at just this point in my journey. The deeper connection I have enjoyed with the First Church Board of Trustees, our Church Staff, and with many of you, has been a blessing.

In thinking and planning for 2022, our board and staff have maintained an intention of community, optimism, and expectation. The social activities of the church continue to be held back, but we are ready to return to them as soon as COVID is under control. We have asked all teams and committees to plan for next year with anticipation that things will improve sometime this year! The teams have developed *aspirational* budgets, plans and goals for 2022 that reflect this. We have funds budgeted for a YETS (Youth Experience in Travel and Service) Trip! Who knows!? We feel strongly that this is the time to continue forth and to maintain connections with our *"companions on this shared journey"* and confront the isolation that we have experienced.

Lastly, I would like to welcome all of the new members to First Congregational Church! It has been joyful and amazing to watch this develop over the past year. Our focus on hospitality, in this year of separation, seemed such a challenge, but clearly, we have done a great job and have much to be thankful for. There is nothing better for our community than new members, new voices, new personalities. I hope that in 2022 we will keep our focus on hospitality while planning aspirationally.

Please join in both the 10am worship (at First Church or online) and our Annual Meeting, at noon on Zoom, on Sunday, February 6: *"as we take the next steps forward"* together. We do not walk alone.

Peace,

Paul

Paul Hobbs, Church President